



Town of Berwyn Heights

5700 Berwyn Road
Berwyn Heights, MD 20740
Tel. (301) 474-5000
Fax (301) 474-5002

MAYOR
Amanda M. Dewey

COUNCIL MEMBERS
Jodie A. Kulpa-Eddy (Mayor Pro Tem)
Christopher S. Brittan Powell
Jason W. Papanikolas
Ethan D. Sweep

Worksession Minutes September 14, 2020 | 7:00 pm

This meeting was held by videoconference due to the ongoing COVID-19 health emergency. The meeting was broadcast on Berwyn Heights cable TV channels and streamed on the Town website. Residents were given the opportunity to join the meeting via Zoom and comment by telephone and email.

The meeting was called to order at 7:09 p.m. Present were Mayor Amanda Dewey, Mayor Pro Tempore (MPT) Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Councilmembers (CMs) Christopher Brittan-Powell, Jason Papanikolas, and Ethan Sweep. Also present were Interim Town Manager (ITM) Laura Allen, Town Clerk Kerstin Harper, County Councilmember Dannielle Glaros, LICD staff Emily Clifton and Suzy Cho.

1. Announcements

Mayor Dewey made announcements regarding a drowning at Lake Artemesia and planning to vote in the upcoming Presidential election.

2. Approval of the Agenda

CM Sweep moved to approve the agenda. MPT Kulpa Eddy seconded. The motion passed 5 to 0.

3. Presentations

County Councilmember Dannielle Glaros: County Councilmember Glaros was present to give an update on County and District 3 news. She briefly described District 3, which she represents, the current County Council, her committee assignments and areas of focus. Highlights include:

- Findings of a Health & Social Services study CM Glaros spearheaded will be available soon.
- CM Glaros is a member of Capital Region Rail Vision, which seeks to guide investment toward improving existing commuter rail connections in the D.C. area.
- CM Glaros is a member of the Purple Line Corridor Coalition Steering Committee which seeks to increase access to good jobs, housing choices, and vibrant communities along the Line; The Purple Line project has stalled due to a serious dispute between the State and the private contractor who is building the streetcar line;
- In response to the pandemic, Greater Riverdale Cares, a non-profit that coordinates distribution of meals and PPE to constituents in need, continues to grow; District 3 staff makes bi-weekly deliveries of meals to seniors and people with disabilities;
- PGCPS' capital improvement plan is up for a 2nd reading this week and includes funding for new schools as well as upgrades to existing schools, such as BHES' HVAC system.
- New development projects are in various stages of completion along Route 1 and the New Carrollton Metro Station.
- CM Glaros office seeks to stay in touch with constituents through regular virtual meetings via Zoom and Facebook Live. All are welcome to participate and suggest topics for discussion.

In response to Council questions, CM Glaros said that ballot drop box locations are in the process of being finalized and will become available in early October. Voters will be asked to vote on a number of ballot questions, which her office will seek to explain through an e-newsletter.

CM Glaros advised that Berwyn Heights should conceive of itself as part of an ecosystem of economic development that occurs in its surroundings, such as will occur around the College Park Metro Station and Beltway Plaza. Town residents have good access to neighboring communities through public transportation and bicycle trails. She plans to work with this Council to push ahead with improvements along the Greenbelt Road corridor.

Capital Region Rail Vision seeks to implement an efficient commuter rail system between Richmond, VA and Baltimore. A consultants' report will be released later this year to lay out an implementation strategy. CM Glaros thinks Maryland needs to develop a comprehensive transportation strategy in which commuter rail should play an important role. Citizen involvement is wanted to help with this effort.

The County Council has an affordable housing opportunities workgroup that is working on crafting an inclusionary zoning ordinance. A consultants' report has been completed and will be discussed at an upcoming County Council meeting to develop next steps.

CM Glaros suggested checking with School Board Member Thomas about the status of proposed renovations at Berwyn Heights Elementary School included in the PGCPSCIP program. Some construction projects are likely to move forward while schools remain closed for the pandemic.

CM Glaros said the County is pushing forward with environmental initiatives, such as a Climate Change Task Force and a watershed awareness project sidelined earlier this year. The watershed awareness project aims to educate people about the Anacostia Watershed by encouraging the naming of small streams and posting of signage to identify them as part of the watershed. Adopt-a-Stream and Rain Check are other effective stream protection programs. The County is also engaged in a stormwater retrofit program to meet federal and state stormwater mandates. Berwyn Heights was the beneficiary of one these retrofit projects.

4. Discussion Items

LIDC Pop's Park concept plan: Mayor Dewey explained that the Low Impact Development Center (LIDC) has worked with the Town to develop a concept plan for redesigning Pop's Park that has stormwater management as a central consideration.

LICD staff Emily Clifton and Suzy Cho were present to give an overview of the plans. Ms. Clifton explained that the project is funded from a grant by the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation as part of a County-wide alternative compliance program for stormwater management. LICD has reached out to cities to identify projects that improve stormwater management in smaller green spaces in cities that can be enjoyed for recreation. LICD met with staff and a number of Town organizations to get feedback. It also carried out a citizen survey that received 61 responses.

Suzy Cho explained the broad goals for the park, which include better connectivity and safety, enhanced park experience for all, and better stormwater management. To realize these goals, the following improvements are proposed:

- Add sidewalks and crosswalks on Quebec Place and Quebec Street for better access and safety;

- Install sanitizer station, shade sail and/ or shade trees, central gathering space;
- Add pollinator garden with interpretive signage and/ or book hub for educational purposes;
- Install porous playground surface with underground temporary stormwater storage chamber;
- Convert drainage swale along rear into sidewalk with permeable pavers and underground stormwater storage channel; add interactive raingarden along the stormwater channel; add bollard lighting along path.

Ms. Clifton and Ms. Cho briefly explained two alternative layouts for Pop’s Park, as set down in conceptual site plans A and B. Both propose adding a sidewalk that would run up to Berwyn Heights Elementary School and provide a safer route to school for students, per recommendation from the Walkable, Bikeable Berwyn Heights Task Force.

Ms. Clifton and Ms. Cho concluded saying that additional comments can be submitted for another week for inclusion in a final concept design. Cost is not a consideration at this stage but will come into play when deciding which elements to include in the detailed plans. The most expensive elements will be the underground stormwater storage facilities.

Investment policy: Mayor Dewey explained that the State of Maryland requires municipalities to regularly file their investment policies. Berwyn Heights’ investment policy was last filed in 1995 and requires updating. TM Broadbent drafted a revised policy, which was presented to the Council in February and March 2020. ITM Allen has reviewed the proposed policy and recommends further changes.

ITM Allen said she mostly tweaked TM Broadbent’s already comprehensive policy and tied it more closely to the best investment practices recommended by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA). The changes are summarized in a staff report and highlighted in a draft policy submitted for Council discussion and feedback.

In response to MPT Kulpa-Eddy, ITM Allen said she removed a section that provided for a citizen review committee to assist the Town Manager in maintaining an internal control structure designed to ensure that the Town’s assets are protected from loss, theft or misuse. She believes this function should be carried out by staff. The Council still has the option of creating a review committee to assist the Council in guiding the overall investment strategy. Mayor Dewey noted that TM Broadbent had intended the review committee to supplement investment expertise that could be lacking in staff and on the Council at any given point in time. MPT Kulpa-Eddy asked that the roles and responsibilities of each party involved in making investment decisions be spelled out more clearly and that the Council have another look at the policy before it is adopted. The Council had no objections.

Beltway widening draft environmental impact statement: Mayor Dewey said that public comments on the Beltway widening DEIS are due in November. She suggested a two-step process for drafting a Council statement: Tonight the Council might outline areas of concern that should be addressed in a letter, with each Councilmember doing research on what they believe to be the most important concerns; and at the next meeting assemble the individual comments into one document.

The following concerns were identified:

- Large sums of money would be invested that may not deliver the desired traffic improvements;
- Inter-County Connector already exists to relieve Beltway congestion;
- Narrowly conceived solution to commuting problems. Many government employees have adjusted to teleworking triggered by pandemic, which may continue into the future;

- Additional lanes may increase traffic as commuters would want to take advantage;
- Use of automobiles should not be encouraged because it contributes to climate change;
- Public transportation is a more equitable means to transport people;
- Interstate expansion is a 20th century solution to 21st century problem;
- Impacts of widening cannot be fully known now;
- Public Private Partnerships (P3) are not suitable for building transportation infrastructure.

Points made in favor of Beltway widening:

- Teleworking effect of pandemic is overstated;
- Widening I-270 makes sense because more people commute from the exurbs.

Mayor Dewey offered to draft a letter based on the concerns expressed tonight, which the Council will be asked to finalize at the next worksession before submitting it to the Maryland Department of Transportation.

Four Cities agenda items: Mayor Dewey said the hosting City of New Carrollton asked whether the other cities feel comfortable meeting in person. Councilmembers discussed it and a majority expressed their preference for a virtual meeting. Clark Harper was asked to check with New Carrollton about details for meeting in person. The following items were proposed for the agenda: Beltway widening comments, Beltway Plaza redevelopment update, and Pepco filing with Public Service Commission.

5. E-Newsletter

MPT Kulpa-Eddy provided a draft e-newsletter for review and input by the Council. Topics covered included: Town manager survey, police station feasibility study, Pop's Park concept designs, Greater Riverdale Cares project, potential NW/EP virtual meeting, 2020 Census homestretch, mail-in voting, and WSSC art contest. Mayor Dewey offered a minor addition to the mail-in voting article.

6. Minutes

The Council reviewed and corrected the August 31 worksession minutes. Adoption of all minutes will take place at the subsequent Town meeting, per recently amended Council Rules.

7. Department Reports

Mayor Dewey thanked staff for working to respond to a major rainstorm last week. She said that a Prince George's County Police reform working group has been established recently, chaired by Del. Alonzo Washington, which will hold a general meeting on September 17, 5:00 pm. Residents can join through the County's website. Registered voters are encouraged to make plans for voting in the general election either by absentee ballot (which can still be requested until October 20), early voting, or Election Day voting. Everyone is reminded to respond to the 2020 Census, ending on September 30, if they have not done so.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy reported that the Education Advisory Committee (BHEAC) has turned over the information collected on learning pods to the family engagement coordinator at BHES and Greenbelt Middle School. The Historical Committee will hold elections at the next meeting. The Police Department will work with the NW/EP Committee on holding a virtual meeting. The Recreation Council will host a last summer concert this Thursday and a virtual Team Trivia event in November. MPT Kulpa-Eddy also reported that ITM Allen is working with Park & Planning to take care of a drainage problem at the Indian Creek Park and trash issue at the tennis and basketball courts at the school.

CM Papanikolas reported that students have completed their first weeks of virtual school and most IT issues have been resolved. ITM Allen has connected with College Park on a building permit study the city is undertaking, which may lead to Berwyn Heights joining a cooperative effort to issue and enforce building permits.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy said that a Natural Resources Inventory Permit has been pulled for a property on Pontiac Street and asked if the Code Department has information on whether a new home being built there. ITM Allen will check into it.

CM Sweep thanked Public Works staff for working during the rainstorm that caused flood damage in many surrounding jurisdictions.

8. Town Council Schedule

The Council reviewed the schedule. No changes were made.

9. Citizen Comments

Joan Hayden, Seminole Street, commented via email that the Beltway widening is likely to affect traffic patterns in the Town and will provide further comments on the subject. She also thanked the Town for taking care of an overflowing trash can along the Indian Creek trail.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper*, Town Clerk